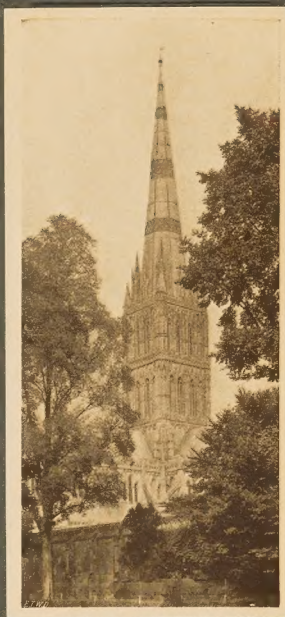


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Portfolio OF English Cathedrals



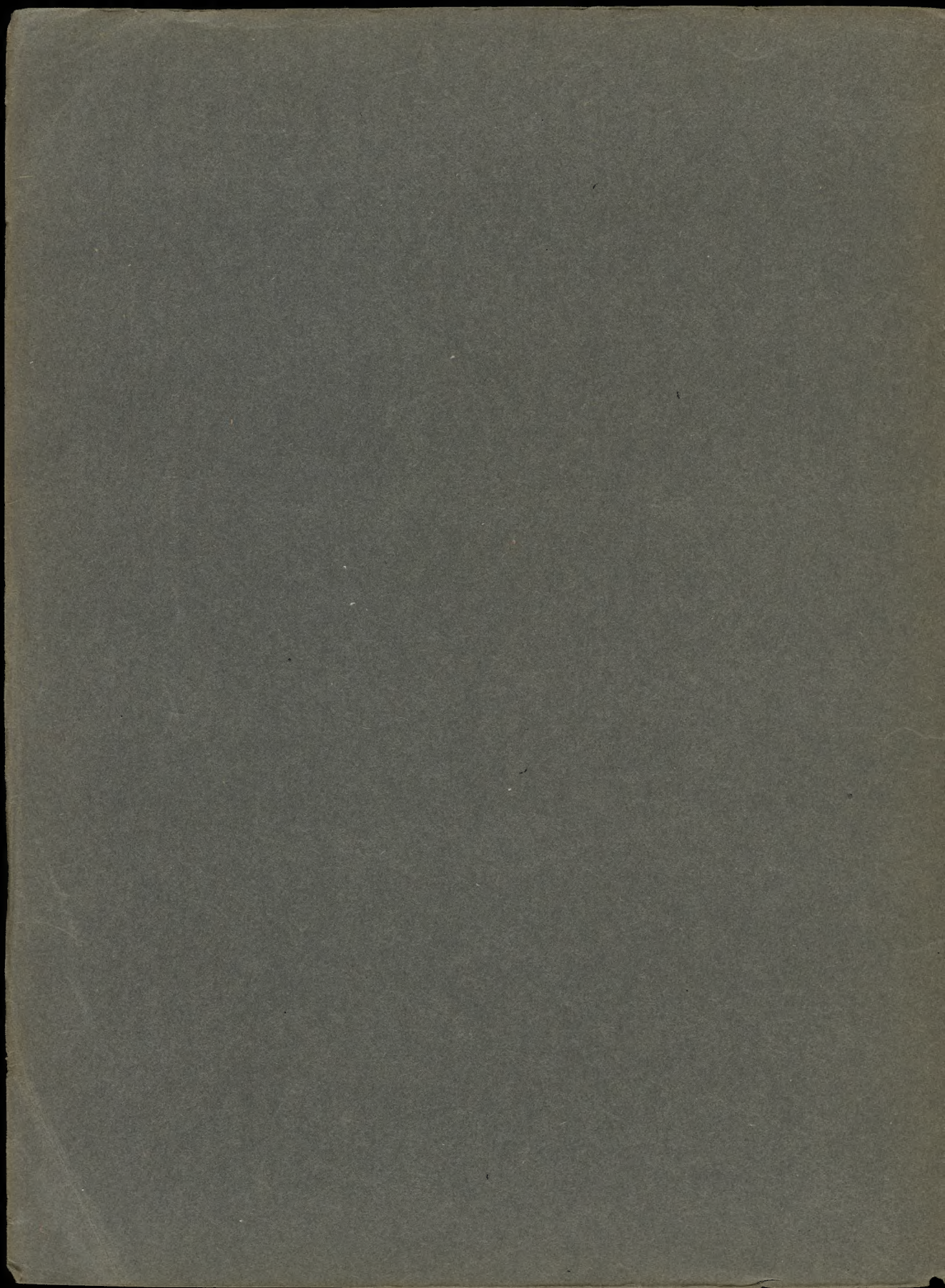
With Historical and
Architectural Notes
By ARNOLD FAIRBAIRNS



SALISBURY

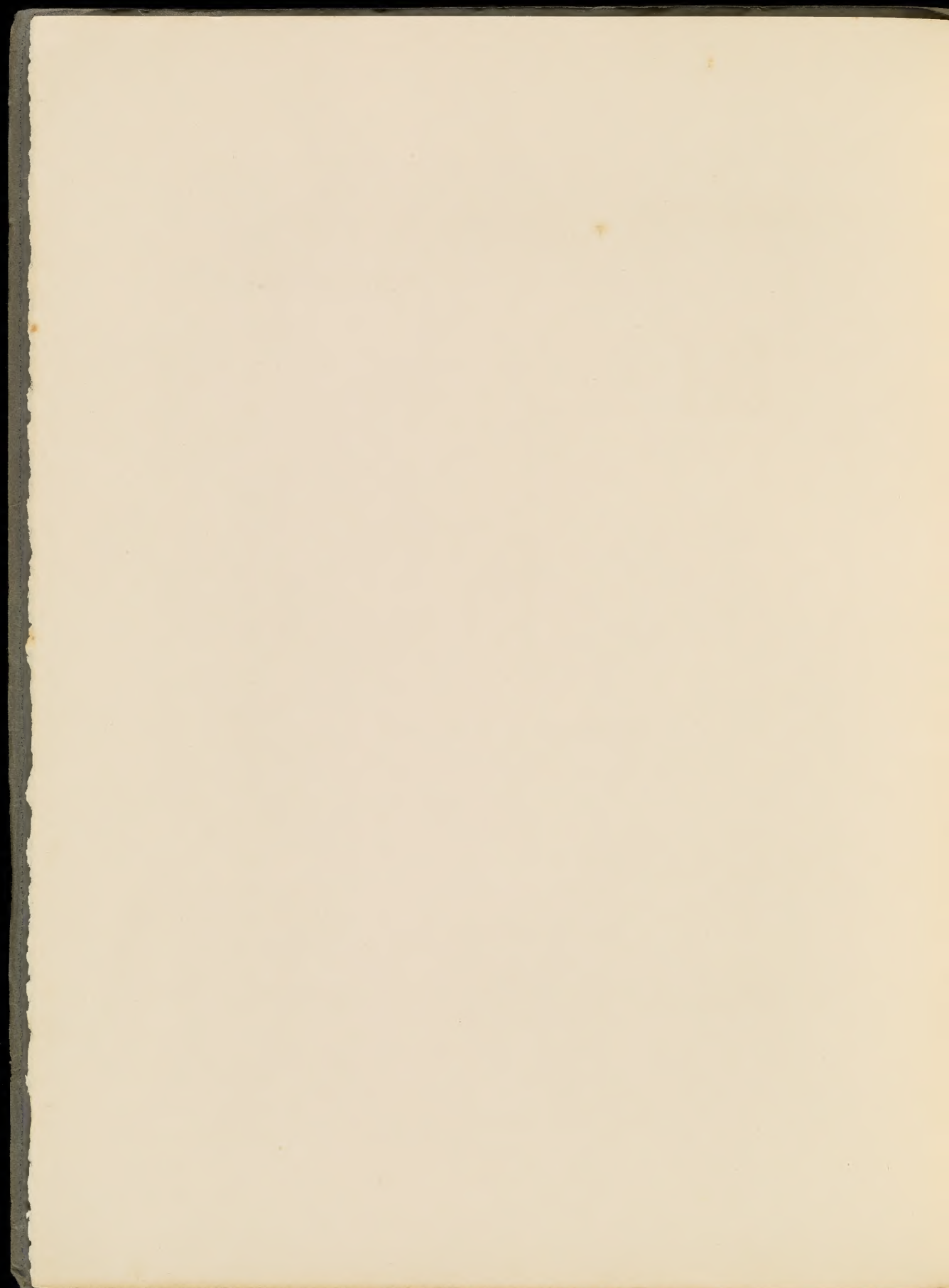
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SALISBURY CATHEDRAL



INTRODUCTION



THE conversion of Wessex was the object of a special mission sent from Rome in 634 under Birinus, a native of Genoa. Dorchester-on-Thames was the first centre chosen for the work, and in fifteen years the people had been for the most part converted. In 705 it was found necessary to divide the kingdom of Wessex into two sees: Winchester and Sherborne, and three more bishoprics, Wells, Crediton, and Ramsbury, were created in 909. The only notable bishops of Sherborne were Aldhelm, the greatest European scholar of his day, who built many churches (among them that at Bradford-on-Avon), and Asser, the friend and biographer of Alfred. In 1075 Herman united Ramsbury and Sherborne, moving the bishop's seat to Old Sarum. His successor, the sainted Osmund, drew up for his clergy the famous "Use of Sarum," which became the standard service book for the whole of southern England. The hill-fortress, however, proved far from satisfactory, for there were constant disputes between the garrison and the cathedral body. Accordingly in 1218 Richard Poore determined to move to a more peaceful situation. In the well-watered valley below a site was found, the Virgin herself (according to the legend) indicating the place where the great church dedicated in her name was to be built. On April 28, 1220, "amid the acclamations of the people," the work was begun. So quickly did funds come in and so well were they administered that in thirty-eight years the building was ready to be consecrated. Thus Salisbury is unique among the great Gothic churches of England, for it was built all in one style and on a virgin site, which gave its builders the rare opportunity of realizing their ideal church, unfettered by any earlier remains the preservation of which was demanded by sentiment or economy.

Of the pre-Reformation bishops Robert Hallam, the leader of the reformers at the Council of Constance (1415), Richard Beauchamp, the builder of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and Cardinal Campeggio, are the only names of any note.

The greatest man that ever held the see was undoubtedly John Jewel (1560—71) renowned for his scholarly "Apology of the Church of England." He built the library over the cloisters at Salisbury, and perceiving "the great want of learned men" maintained many scholars at Oxford, among them Richard Hooker, the author of the famous "Ecclesiastical Polity."

Of the subsequent prelates two alone deserve special mention: Seth Ward (1667—89), for the loving care he bestowed on the restoration of the cathedral and palace, and his successor Gilbert Burnet, for his admirable "History of his Own Times." For the rest Salisbury can boast no brilliant succession of statesmen such as Canterbury or Winchester. Her path has been far from the doings of the busy world; and it would seem as if the eternal peace of the cathedral Close had left its impress on the lives of those who have worked therein.

FROM THE NORTH-EAST

TO the traveller coming from the bustle of the narrow streets of the crowded market town upon the wide-spreading lawns of the peaceful Close, the story of the divine inspiration which led Bishop Poore to select this site seems at once justified and natural. Other churches may have more romantic or grander settings; but none can surpass Salisbury in its perfect calm and peace.

The uniformity of style throughout the building serves to accentuate this impression, and thanks to its perfect proportions and complex plan no sense of dulness supervenes. Up to the roof-level is the work of only thirty-eight years. The tower and spire were added nearly a century later in the richer Decorated style. They do not, however, impair the harmony of the composition; indeed they seem rather to give it the true power and meaning which the early builders intended, the rich arcades of the tower forming a glorious crown to the severe purity of the Early English work.



FROM THE NORTH-EAST

THE NAVE

AFTER the glorious exterior on which time has laid such a kindly hand, the interior of Salisbury is disappointing. The restorers have been at work and beautiful features which escaped the soldiers of the Civil War, have perished at the hands of those who professed to love and understand.

Wyatt, at the close of the eighteenth century, destroyed nearly all the softly tinted glass which filled the church with the delicate light so necessary to a building of such simple character. How much the beauty of a mediæval church depends upon its glass York Minster clearly shows. Here at Salisbury the destruction of the glass has left all cold and bare, half-dead through exposure to the glaring light. Yet, such is the power of the builders, even now under the most adverse circumstances the nave possesses a simple beauty of proportion which is most striking.

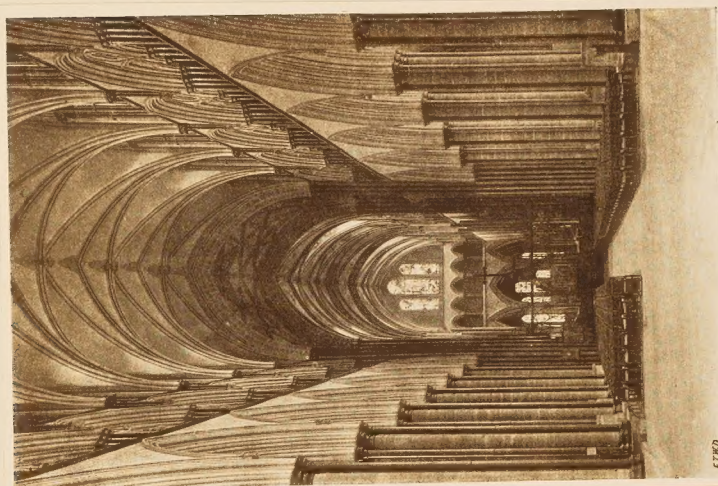
Wyatt is responsible for the arrangement of the tombs, which have lost much of their interest through his careless reconstruction. Many, however, are still of considerable note, especially those of three early bishops, Herman, Jocelyn, and Roger, brought from Old Sarum; of William Longespee, son of Henry II., one of the witnesses to Magna Charta; and of the romantic little "Boy Bishop."

THE TRANSEPTS

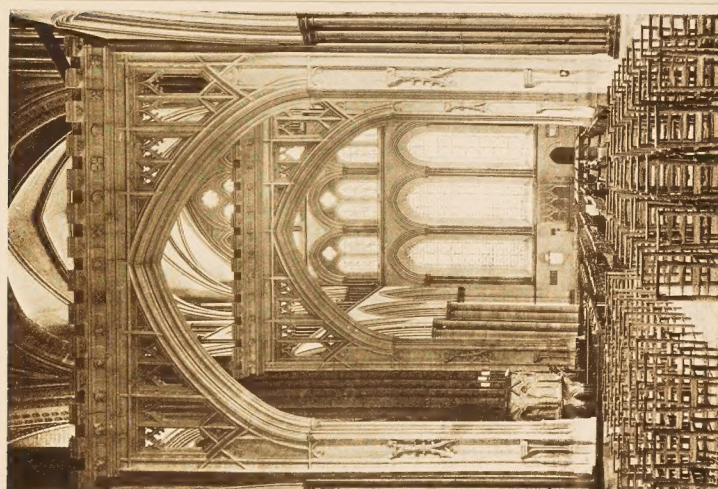
WHETHER the spire was planned by the original builders or not its addition has had a considerable influence on the history of the building. The piers which were called upon to bear the immense weight of the tower and spire were quite unequal to the task, and the two western ones soon gave way. In spite of an elaborate system of buttresses, both without and within, the whole structure threatened to collapse. In the fifteenth century, therefore, these two great Perpendicular arches were built across the central transepts, and inverted arches across the lesser transepts. At the time of Sir Christopher Wren's survey the spire was twenty-three inches out of the perpendicular, but no further settlement has taken place. The danger has rather been of the tower walls bursting outwards. To prevent this Sir Gilbert Scott's engineer devised an elaborate system of iron-ties which has proved entirely successful, and there now seems no danger of the spire's sharing the fate which befell that at Chichester.

In the south transept, a fine example of the grisaille glass which once filled the windows of the church is to be seen.

SALISBURY CATHEDRAL



THE NAVE



THE TRANSEPTS

THE CHOIR

WELLS and Salisbury are renowned for the beauty of their eastern terminations, and are interesting examples of the English builders' equivalent of the Continental apse. By a most happy inspiration in the plan of the retro-choir the Wells architects have achieved one of the masterpieces of gothic art, and Salisbury must acknowledge its superiority. But as being the conception of one mind and that nearly sixty years earlier than Wells, this beautiful composition of choir and chapels is of exceptional interest. Moreover, symmetry is the prevalent note all through the cathedral, and the intricacy of Wells would hardly have been in place here.

On either side of the altar stand the chantries of Bishop Audley (1520) and Walter, Lord Hungerford, the latter a fine example of early iron work (1429).

Wyatt replaced the original choir-screen, which is still preserved in the north-east transept, by one composed of fragments from the chantries he destroyed. Sir Gilbert Scott in his turn cleared this away and substituted a light metal screen. At the same time he built the beautiful altar and designed the stalls partly from old fragments dating from a very early period. The vault-painting is a modern restoration of work which was probably contemporary with the building.

SALISBURY CATHEDRAL



THE CHOIR

THE LADY CHAPEL

BISHOP POORE began building his new church at the east, and before his translation to Durham three altars had been consecrated. His architect was Elias de Dereham, who is best known for his great Chapel of the Nine Altars. At Salisbury his work was in no way inferior, and the grace and lightness of his Lady Chapel make it one of the most beautiful works of the period. The slender columns which support the vault are in some cases less than twelve inches in diameter, but they are so skilfully placed that there is not the least sense of instability about the work.

On either side of the chapel there were till Wyatt's time two beautiful Perpendicular chantries, built by Bishop Beauchamp and the Hungerford family. The great Tudor monument in the south aisle commemorates Edward, Earl of Hertford, son of Protector Somerset, and his wife Lady Catherine Grey.

St. Osmund's shrine stood in the Lady Chapel till the Reformation, when it was of course demolished. His supposed tomb is now in the nave.

SALISBURY CATHEDRAL



THE LADY CHAPEL

TOMB OF BISHOP BRIDPORT

THIS beautiful memorial to Bishop Giles, of Bridport, has fortunately escaped to a great extent the rough treatment meted out to the other mediæval tombs in the cathedral. It is an exceptionally fine specimen of Geometrical work, the carving being wonderfully life-like and full of feeling. The four spandrls on each side contain presentments of scenes in the bishop's life, one being the consecrating of a church, for it was he who finished the cathedral. The figures are most likely the work of the sculptor who executed the famous biblical carvings in the Chapter House.

In the opposite transept is the fine brass of Bishop Wyville, a great defender of the temporalities of the see. He is represented standing in Sherborne Castle, which he won back from William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, on payment of a large sum of money. His armed champion at the gate shows that he was prepared for more violent measures.

Bishop Jewel is buried in the aisle close to this militant prelate.

THE CHAPTER HOUSE

THERE was no need at Salisbury for cloisters and chapter house as there was at the monastic cathedrals, such as Durham. They were, therefore, built last (1262—70), after the church was finished, except the tower and spire. The style shows a marked development from the simplicity of the Lady Chapel, and indeed is Geometrical in all its features rather than Early English.

The doorway of the Chapter House is quite the most beautiful part of the building, and the statuettes of the Virtues trampling on the Vices are exquisite examples of early Gothic sculpture.

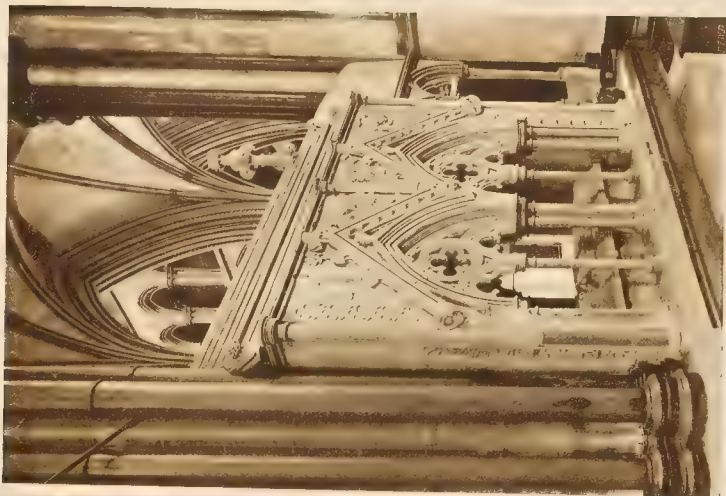
Within, the most notable feature is the series of biblical scenes carved above the seats. The whole building was originally gorgeously coloured, and an attempt was made to renew the decorations about forty-five years ago. It was, however, unsuccessful, and now all below the sill of the windows has been removed. At the same time the sculptures were most carefully restored, most of the heads having been destroyed during the Civil War.

From the cloisters, which are of exceptional beauty, there is one of the most impressive views of the spire. The comparative lowness of the roof gives its full height to the tower, an advantage which is frequently lost in Continental churches with their soaring vaults.

SALISBURY CATHEDRAL



THE CHAPTER HOUSE



TOMB OF BISHOP BRIDPORT

FROM THE BISHOP'S GARDEN

ON the south side of the cathedral the beautiful gardens of the Palace and the presence of the Chapter House and Cloisters make an even more beautiful, if less symmetrical, group than the north side.

It is doubtful if the Chapter House ever had a pointed roof ; but it would be greatly improved by one, its present appearance being rather stunted.

The construction of the spire is most curious, and shows that its builder fully realized the danger of his task. For the first twenty feet the walls are two feet thick, and after that only nine inches. The whole of the upper part is filled with the original scaffolding, which has been left to stiffen the slender structure.

It was from the lake in these gardens that Constable painted one of his famous pictures of the cathedral.

SALISBURY CATHEDRAL



FROM THE BISHOP'S GARDEN

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